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JOHN RUSKIN

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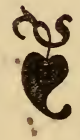
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John Ruskin

The Voice of the New Age

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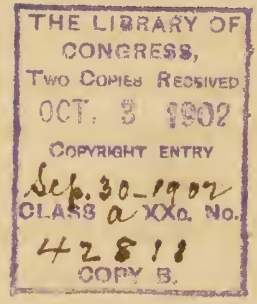
J. S. MONTGOMERY



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IN the concrete we are Christian, but in the realm of the abstract we are part infidel. The story of some simple life comes to us in the measure of an unequaled charm. To the mind are presented three objects—love, religion, and patriotism. Give them flesh, and we understand. Real men with real voices and real hearts make an earthly scene which is attractive. Philosophy can explain the song-bird; but explanation is not inspiration. The latter we must have. The bird in the overhanging bough moves us as it pours forth a throat filled with liquid song. But the theory of music is a bald conclusion. The history of flowers, rocks, and stars can never compete with the story of some great heart. The day would be poor indeed were it not for models and

master—uplifted and illuminated. The world is filled with gifts good and perfect, but the richest products of any age are conscience, love, and ideals. The world very justly appreciates a Newton, whose mind stepped from star to star and from system to system, and a Bacon, whose great genius could untwist the unseen elements of the world-house; but John Ruskin, ethical teacher, prophet, and seer, inspires great strength, by which the higher goodness is made attainable.

God not only spoke once, but he is speaking still. Inspiration is continuous. God's unfolding truth journeys with man; he is ever breathing into the breast of some prophet his providences and purposes. A long time ago he said unto one, "Go!" and he goeth. And at the approach of the footstep of Abraham the growing pathway widened into a highway of righteousness. The voice said again, "Come!" and he com-

eth; and lo! that son of Tarsus, whose tunic was stained with a brother's blood, became a penitent beneath the Syrian sky. Upon the world's horizon have ever stood prophets. They leaned not upon the accidents of life; they were God-appointed. They worshiped not at the perishable shrines of glory, gold, or greatness. God exalted them; and through such master minds all progress is wrought. This is God's way.

To the list of earth's immortals, unto whom human life and welfare were sacred, we hasten to add the name of John Ruskin. Epoch-making men in any century are rare and infrequent creations. It is only given to a few to date new eras for themselves. The note of the prophet is not a common endowment. To change the current of social and religious life and throw it into untried channels is no easy task. Society has ever made bold strikes to extricate itself by the discipline of policy. But John Ruskin stands

apart. He brings a divine touch to every impulse of the human heart. Much that is deepest in human faculty and finest in human feeling are responding to his precept and example. He has rolled the world upon the heart, and the ministry of the heart upon the world. Thus he disowned a religion engendered of self. He bent his religion to human need, and angels knew him as a brother.

John Ruskin preached his first sermon when a lad of three. "People," said the tot, "be good. If you are good, God will love you. If you are not good, God will not love you. People, be good." He never changed his message. Like Lindsley, the novelist, and Browning, the poet, when first impressions began to nibble at the mind, John Ruskin foreshadowed his life purpose. He preached. Let not our estimate of him be too exclusive. When he saw colors in sweet harmony splashed upon the canvas, or in-

genious scars carved in marble, or nature clothed in loveliness, he knew it, and called them beautiful. But he did not stop in the empire of form and feature. These, alone, were misshapen dwarfs. They were like lowering clouds upon his brow. Here is where Nireus camped. In Ruskin's score and a half volumes the view that he was only an art critic and a lover of nature is put to flight. Primarily he is moralist—a teacher of ethical and religious truth. He ever felt the mighty substance of eternity and the feverish shadow of time. Among the mellow tints of human life he saw the hovering shadows over all. He planted his feet on bed-rock, and, with his brow in the skies, by his marvelous gifts and by his mortal failings, he followed his bent—which was preacher. As prophet and man "He cared for nature more than art; for human kind more than nature; for the glory of God most of all." In art alone his soul rebelled and

refused to abide. That eminent Christian scholar, Dr. Waldstein, says: "Ruskin's strongest points and greatest achievements are not to be found in the domain of art. Art, as such, does not respond to the bent of his natural mind." He travels through nature and art. He loves the delights of the passage, but he leads on to the sanctuary. Humanity is the first and the last of his sermon. He stays in the oratory of the soul. Frederick Harrison instructs us. He says: "John Ruskin began by preaching to us a higher sense of art in order to lead us up to a truer understanding of morality, industry, religion, and humanity."

True, "art" was his text; but right living was his message. He preached as a child of the noon, for his soul was as the summer skies. His French critics follow in the peacock's train, whose ideas of art and the beautiful are as the wandering shades of watered silk. They bow at the altar, "Art for art's

sake." It is not strange that the French school should quarter their appreciation of this man and mock at his ideals. They lived, by word and action, that "art is its own religion, its own morality, and we want neither Bible nor missal to show us how to paint." When Tennyson's eyes fell upon these words, he blurted out with surface bluntness, "That is the road to hell." "Agreed," Ruskin would have answered. Within his bosom's core he was Puritan, though he would have disowned the brand. He was obstinate, and dared the vice of honesty. Art, ethics, and religion were in immeasurable momentum in this gifted man. In each realm he is an ambassador of true life. In the domain of character he labors. Here he exhales the odor of sanctity. He never imperils the soul's throne. In the first volume of "Modern Painters" he wrote, "Art has for its business to praise God." In the last volume he said, "Art is the ex-

pression of delight in God's work." A good work has been done when the ignorant mouth has been shut. De la Sizerrane, in a fret, cries, "Passionate love of nature was Ruskin's Alpha and Omega." Not so. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever, was his shorter catechism. Other than this, to him all paintings were daubs and nature a riddle. In his world beautiful was the perfect flowering of all life; life fragrant, life expanded into great heart, full of love and blessed. In this teaching were the essences which turn our little worlds into growing gardens of unspeakable gifts.

Was he orthodox? At times he repels us, and we revolt. The trouble is, he applies the truth with such level and impartial sweep that he stuns; dreadfully unanswerable; yet he touches the Christian ideal at every point. Critics have chased him with unsparing tread because he is too absolutely

Christian; he spares not; he bites too deep; he simply strips the truth of all artificialities. To him the Sermon on the Mount is real. He seeks to take it away from the mere jugglers, and hand it over to the multitudes, that it may become a common rule of conduct and a simple hope of heaven. To many the ethics of this greatest sermon is revolutionary. For the Church we can not make a great claim that it is attempting to apply them to public and private life. Too often there is a shrinking from the labels "foolish," "Utopian," "fanatical." Writes an agnostic of to-day of Ruskin, "He had hold of the gospel." In the every-day application of the gospel Ruskin was disquieting, relentless, and frightfully terrifying to the average Christian. His whole aim was simply to carry out into the routine of daily life the truths that Christians profess on Sundays. With him all days were holy days, all water was holy water, and

all bread was sacrificial bread. Thus he caused alienations and conflicts. He kindled the wrath of professor and Churchman. They turned up perplexingly angular. But often it is, to live in peace with God we must live in enmity of man. All the while Ruskin's sanity was delightful. The simple teaching of Jesus was his plea. He stood apart from theologic dye-stuff, declaring that sweet simplicity was the terminal point of all progress. If the sparrow is glad and the lily happy, he wondered why man went about the earth mourning and weeping.

As the present-day progress of discoveries and inventions is witnessed, we are amazed that the world journeyed so many long centuries without them. Yet we have just reason to be more deeply surprised at a Christendom which has traveled nigh a score of centuries without learning that plain Christianity is the life of Jesus. There are numerous questions relating to credal state-

ment about which we shall never know the Master's mind. Many intellectual inquiries he passed by. But the example he set and the precepts he taught admit of no doubt. He taught that man was the daily recipient of the treasury of mercy; if hungry, thirsty, or guilty he was to be sought as guest to the King's feast, and as child of hope the Rock of his confidence is ever sure. While clutching at the horn of his danger, stupidly deaf, taking note of nothing good, and catching at the bright decoys of sin, the Father's house is always open. In his emphasis of practical Christianity Ruskin paints a great streak in the coming dawn. Life! life! is the keyword of his doctrine, and shall never crumber to the sand. It is the supreme actuality of the universe and the nourishing bread of heaven. It transforms earth, sky, and water into flowers, trees, buds, and blossoms. So it is, Jesus flings it into souls and bids them live. In

the fabric of character it is the one great word. In its vocabulary there are none greater. 'T is the dominating note of the whole Bible. Man can not float while common sense is swamped. The glory of the Alpine flower is safe. It sends its searching roots away down deep into the very heart of the flaky rock, and lays hold of the secret place in the hidden cleft. Thus it lives. It is the Christ-life that saves man; life unfettered that begets the creature's nobility. But not only so. In a world where the oarsman must pull or perish, where every peril has a gaping gate and every creature is the pensioner of God, man must be his brother's savior. This is Ruskin. He flamed forth this mighty conviction. He struck "between the joints of the harness." Sage-life he possessed; a ponderous endurance of decision. He was all oak. Amid the hurricanes of the critics, he was like a promontory in might. He breasted criti-

cisms as arrows glance from adamant. To him the path of service was the path to glory. His ideals were not too high nor his claims too great. While his numerous contemporaries, of the materialistic sort, were quibbling about the dust of man and the "rib" of woman, our prophet was pleading for "man—man, the favorite of God." A humble shoemaker listened one day for the footfall of Christ. He had dreamed that the Master would visit him that day. All through its hours the poor workman watched and waited. In the interim he found time to relieve the distress of an aged man, a sick woman, and a cripple boy. At evening time, weary and sick at heart, he fell upon his knees, and expressed disappointment that the Christ had not made his promised visit, and the voice answered, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, thy brethren, ye have done it unto me." Arise; let us go. Make every added oppor-

tunity and every increasing gift a pledge to duty and greater obligation. May there be seen, in growing outlines, the image of Christ!—even as Dante, scaling terrace after terrace of "Purgatorio," beheld in rapturous joy the growing form of his beloved Beatrice. Ruskin's dictum is: "Put your creed into your deed. Character is greater than catechism."

Ruskin's "Unto this Last," two-score years ago, set the boasting political economists howling. He was guilty of a daring intrusion. In Ruskin's mix, ethics and æsthetics became one lump. 'T is the old cry, Let the preacher stick to the gospel, as the cobbler does to his last. This is an easy retort. To complicate matters is a galling violation, you know. Ethics and æsthetics are delegated to live apart, declared the critics. John Ruskin taught that they are inseparable and are twisted around the ribs of the globe. The one must be grafted onto

the strength of the other. By ethical consideration he sought to leaven the lump of political economy by asking how the people lived. To him the *wealth* of humanity was the only real riches of life. With him religion was a strange commodity; the more you send away, the more you have at home. When the critics were pursuing him, like hounds chasing a wild hare, with quick bound and hot breath, Ruskin, like the Prophet of Carmel, without toil or travail, said: "There is no wealth but life; life, including all the powers of love, of joy, of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy beings." But the economists regarded man as ratchet, wheel, or screw in some inhuman machine. Scanning the surface of life, they counted the rich the only happy; wealth as the compensating peace which never faileth to gladden man in his afflictions. Ruskin seeks to draw the angel out

of man by wholesome influences, unselfish service, by lifting him, and by justice. True life was not a question of coin or doctrinal statement. These worshipers were of the outer-court sort. Character is moral, and not ceremonial; is daily practice based on daily precept. He stirred the pulse of these human highlands with a truth that is destined to weld the pure elements of human life into one everlasting harmony. The truth he states, says one, is this: "He deliberately lays down an ethical standard of conduct for the art of political economy, the acceptance of which entirely alters the nature of the science." Man is greater than system or institution. Conscience and reason must be companions. Do n't confuse him with Tolstoi. The latter is a literalist; the former is sanely practical. Tolstoi is contemplation; Ruskin is now. One is ascetic, and the other is hand to hand. In "Unto this Last," Ruskin's concluding passage is: "Consider

whether, even supposing it guiltless, luxury would be desired by any of us if we saw clearly by our sides the suffering which accompanies it in this world. Luxury is indeed possible in the future—innocent and exquisite; luxury for all; but luxury at present can only be enjoyed by the ignorant; the cruelist man living could not sit at the feast, unless he sat blindfolded. Raise the veil boldly; face the light." The stroke is bold. To raise the veil is the very last thing people want to do. The suggestion makes panic of thought; it sets truants guessing. One long drama is yet to come—the drama of man. It takes time for a great idea to take color and ripen. In the meantime, minds light and childish may laugh at the life and pleadings of such a man, and prophesy foolish things. In the Ruskinian awakening the future has begun to glow. Each year bears a deeper shading of his thought. In this renaissance swarthy labor

and easy opulence shall sit down together, and each will claim the right to carry the heavier burden. Man, and man alone, is to wear the crown jewels. With a divine impressiveness that shall grow forever shall be handed over to the races of men that prismatic conception of earth's greatest philosophy which first echoed in the ears of the wondering multitudes as they were gathered about the mountain's base: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

And idealist was he? A brothmaker? He comes from subtle heights to splendid service! In the spacious rooms of his great breast the world's strays found hospitality. His was a fellowship that is vigorous and efficacious. But how shall we explain him? A life so wondrously converged asks questions. The traveler follows the "Father of Waters" to the little lake in the North, in

whose face is reflected the imagery of the skies. But its source is not there. It lies far beyond and above in the clouds and winds of the heavens, where lie silent the rainstorm and the snowfall. True greatness so often lies beyond blood and environment. It is God-born, and not man-made. John Ruskin was born a child of genius and an heir to wealth. At the age of twenty-one, as author and heir, London parlors and drawing-rooms were ready to lionize him. The moment was critical; but he was high-minded. He yearned to see the vision—refusing the glittering pathways in which the rich were vying with each other. The veil dropped, and he looked to see. Henceforward he was a knight errant of the poor. Morning after morning he visited the London docks where men and women were crowding the gates. They were weak and faint with hunger; their eyes were feverish pools of want, and their faces pinched and

drawn. Thousands of these honest idlers gathered here daily, at an early hour, that they might get a job of work, to earn a bit of bread for starving wives and mothers and crying children. He visited Whitechapel at the evening hour, and there saw the motley gangs of men, women, and children returning from their toil, whose daily stint was fourteen hours. Here they toiled for the beggar's wage, within walls whose every pore oozed filth and poison. Here brains were made drunken, the blood hot and feverish. Dwarfed mentally and shriveled physically, they soon yielded to some contagion, and, dying, they left an enfeebled offspring. The human heart must be a companion of man's philosophy. Theory must not outrace practice. Birds long caged lose the power of their wings.

A cruel deed
It is, poor bird, to cage thee up
A prisoner for life, with just a cup
And box of seed.

Man is better than many sparrows, indeed; but London's poor were sadly like the bird in the prison-house—a cage, a cup, and a crust. Out West there is a wide, strange area where smoke pours out of the porous earth, hot water shoots high into the air, the fumes of poison cause the brain to reel, the soil is spongy and sinks under foot, vegetation can not grow, birds come not here; hissing sounds are heard which set the nerves on edge. Shocked, the traveler to this place mutters, with bated breath, "Hell is not far away." When Ruskin went about old London, sounding its depths, his stricken soul mourned, "Hell is close at hand." Issuing from sepulchers foul and fearful, wretched hovels, sweating vats, and alleyways as dark as night, he saw the laborers like unto black shadows—the wreckage upon life's sea. May a distinction be made here in favor of Dante's hell? In his hell only the cruelly wicked suffer; but in Lon-

don the poor and innocent wore the crown of thorns.

> Work, work, work,
> My labor never flags;
> And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
> A crust of bread and rags;
> A shattered roof, and this naked floor,
> A table, a broken chair,
> And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
> For sometimes falling there.

While London was thus prison and hospital, thirstily strained the rich; a ravenous greed was gnawing. Like the wide, extensive districts of the torrid zone, they yielded no kindly nourishment. Justice was on the cross. The rich were clutching at the poor man's bed of straw to weave it into cots of ease. In this hour Ruskin's whole being revolted. He clinched a rigid fist, and, with justifiable rage, he used two voices—the bark of an infuriated dog, and the call to the sanctuary. All the time they were glut-

ting at their maw and casing their hearts in iron. Stuffed with plum pudding, cheeks red and beefy, assessors and receivers, and the poor in mute submission.

John Ruskin taught that the obligations of wealth and genius are superior. He allowed them no release in evergreen pastures, where they might coo life away in indolence and sin. In their unwillingness to wear the yoke he salved them not with easy words. While they claimed an exclusive heritage, a latitude denied the common stock, an exemption from earth's burdens, he stood as champion of human justice. He was the warder at the gateway of right. He was more concerned about earth's hell than he was about the hell that is to come. With him a heaven on earth was quite as important as a heaven in a world hereafter. The modern novel is a remarkable evolution. Its present supremacy is unique. Its beginning was not

altogether creditable. In the days of Fielding and Smollett the lords and ladies of creation were canonized by the genius of the storyteller. To-day the novelist makes onslaught on hypocritical condonation, especially in high places. A number of years ago there lived in the public mind of our country a great genius. This man was cleverly heartless, and wittily wicked. By virture of his imperial intellect, he claimed the right of indulgence. He refused to wear the yoke of manhood, and scandalized society. In the National department of justice, standing before the picture of one of New England's famous sons, one is reminded of the tragedy of a woman's heart. In college he stood at the head of his classes. On the night of his graduation, he led to the altar one of New England's loveliest daughters. Next to God, on whom the beautiful maiden stayed her soul, was the love she bore him. Heaven

smiled upon the union. They returned to a palace. Ere long it was changed into a drunkard's home. The cheek that once blushed as a climbing rose was faded. Sad fate had left its carving lines upon her brow. Only a few short years she lingered upon that verge that divides existence from the grave. Here was greatness of genius taking exemption from the laws of right living. Other centuries have been the white man's age, but this one is the age of man. The play of human rights is destined to continue. Ruskin exclaims to the ingenious, as well as the humblest son: "Do justice and judgment, that 's your Bible order; that 's the service of God—not praying and psalm-singing. We are imprudent enough to call our beggings and shoutings, 'Divine service.' Alas! unless we perform divine service in every willing act of life, we never perform it all. The one divine work, the one order of service and

sacrifice, is to do justice. Do justice to your brother; you can do that whether you love him or not, and you will come to love him. But do justice to him because you don't love him, and you will come to hate him." This declaration was made to an audience of Christians in 1865. His word is, money, genius, and talent are to be used for man, and our chief duty among our fellows is to prove maxim by precept. We are men, and, as such, we owe ourselves to all mankind. In the "Crown of Wild Olives," which is strikingly clear and tremendously sane, he assails the modern version and practice of Christianity. He goes the whole length. He spares not the exalted ones in their wretched deformities, though they may be gracefully carved and delicately painted. He says, "You knock a man into the ditch, and then you tell him to remain content in the position in which Providence has placed him."

And, again, he says to the Bradford merchant: "We have indeed a nominal religion to which we apply tithes of property and sevenths of time; but we have a practical and earnest religion to which we devote nine-tenths of our property and six-sevenths of our time. And we dispute a great deal about the nominal religion, but we are all unanimous about the practical religion of which the ruling goddess may be best generally described as the 'Goddess of Getting On.'" Slightly extravagant? Is he unfaithful to the day in its actual type? Dare we, receiving bread, give a stone; receiving fish, give a serpent? The core of Ruskin's creed is this, that all property and all talent are given as sacred trusts.

He scans the appalling number of human foes. He argues the pliancy of the soul. 'T is an old truth, two pictures —Marie Antoinette and Joan of Arc. In the constant presence of the one, the mind

is tinctured with vice and viciousness; by the daily look upon the other, the life is flavored with unselfishness, purity, and nobility. Man is clay, and often it is that environment is the potter. Environment is weight, or wings to the soul. It makes one sodden and mentally stupid, while on some, Michael's face, the outer glow is only the expression of an inner warmth. This is one of Ruskin's supreme claims. As noiselessly, but yet as surely as the moth frets at the fringes of the purple rose, so do the dark, dismal surroundings cause creeping paralysis of mind and gnawing deadness of nerve, until careless, indifferent victims, unmindful of dark and awful possibilities, wabble into an oblivious eternity. John Ruskin saw these burdened lives, and realized their tragic ends. His soul mourned the squalor, filth, darkness, and death of the tenement district. His soul cried aloud to move this mass and mix of human life,

and lift the curse from the humblest one. We have stood on the shore of old ocean. Its majestic independence struck us. How placid it seemed as the waves broke in innocence upon the rocks. We paused on the sands. In the fairy chemistry of the spattered spray we loved to bathe our face. The beauty of the sunlit landscape is the offspring of the old sea. The beady foam is like strings of pearls in braids of glory. No wonder the seagull sleeps upon the waves. Splashed into the firmament, how fascinating! The sun, the outstretched skies, the shadows, the foam, the shells, set in the azure blue of the laughing deep, form a picture for the envy of painter and poet. But come! Listen! What awful secrets are hidden in its mighty depths. Amid the slime and filth what treasures lie buried. How many pallid faces, appealing for help and succor, have gone down through its seething waves. What a charnel

house it is! Could its crystal gates be opened and the ghosts come forth, the world itself would be teeming with phantoms that would unnerve and pall the hearts of men! O the hopes, joys, and loves, the things precious of mind and heart, the glorious argosies of human wealth which have gone down because of "man's inhumanity to man." Ruskin saw the tragedies of environment. His argument is sane. Says he, Let the child of good fortune and refinement exchange homes with the child of the tenement district, and the former will go down to shame and ruin, while the latter will go up to honor and success. No songster comes from the brood of serpents; no mellow-throated lark from the nest of the carrion bird. His plea is for the simple ministrations of beauty to fall on the stressed and the distressed. The fact and the power of beauty must be recognized. On a summer's day we flee from the city to escape

the decorations of man, and, in the country, we fall into the sweeter enchantments of the All-father. For lo! his fields and hillsides are carpeted with green; the garments of tree and shrub throw off perfume; the dewdrops sparkle like condensed sunshine; the branches follow the grace of the lily's stem; the vines are swinging festoons; great trees form Gothic arches, and the whole woodland is a temple of song. God loves the beautiful. We would die were we only saints. To enjoy the law of the beautiful is to be natural. Music is as useful as a steam engine. Beauty thrown upon wall, canvas, floor, or table is as full of utility as the rolling, sparkling trolley. Architecture is as valuable as plows and steel rails. In a day so excessively commercial, this truth needs emphasis. Ruskin's thought is that a mind stirred to feel the proportions of a graceful arch, the beauty of a column, or the delicate shadings of

line is prepared to appreciate the more exalted forms of beauty as they may appear. Such a one can pass, without effort, from the Venus de Milo to the Sistine Madonna, from the grandeur of Solomon's temple to the infinite worth of the Christ, and listen to the truth of eternity as it falls from his holy lips.

While Ruskin was seeking explanations of the wretchedness of the poor man's home, he visited Sheffield. Here he mingled with the workmen in iron and steel. They were without models. Minds uninstructed, and hands unguided, made menial drudgery of labor. Ruskin brought hither his numerous pieces of his magnificent marbles, gathered in Greece and Italy; his art treasures, collected in Florence, Rome, and Paris, and, with free hand, distributed them among the workmen of the Sheffield factories, that after these models they might trace the graceful line in the handiwork of

their daily toil. A few years passed, and the lines and tints of these models were repeated on walls and furniture, and sprinkled in home-made carpets and rugs. John Ruskin was the father of diffusive art. For many long centuries genius carved and painted for palace and temple. Hither were carried statues, white and lifelike; paintings, rare and rich; tapestries, choice and beautiful; mosaics, radiant with precious gems. But during these long ages, the poor, through many centuries, lived in caves of clay, with roofs of straw, and floors of mud. The common herd, so branded, was debased with an abhorrent ugliness. Unto this prophet is due credit for the commencement of that era, in which to-day the lowliest home of the humblest citizen is blessed by the presence of beauty and grace.

Ruskin's doctrine of money-getting and money-spending was bold and courageous and revolutionary. Upon the faces of

bond, mortgage, and writ were the scars of distortion. He believed that money-getting was the curse of man. He said, with Plato, "The citizen must be happy and good, but very rich and very good at the same time he can not be." To him the rich man's heart sounded like sap-wood. He dared impertinent questions. He did not ask how much was given in benevolence, but how was the money earned. His questions were unanswered. On the bold pages of "Fors Clavigera," he says: "Dick Turpin is blamed by some plain-minded person for consuming the means of other people's living. 'Nay,' says Turpin, to the plain-minded person, 'observe how beneficently and pleasantly I spend whatever I get.' 'Yes, sir,' persists the plain-minded person; 'but how do you get it?' 'The question,' says Dick, 'is insidious and irrelevant.'" Ruskin turns, and charges on counterfeited charity: "No man ever became,

or can become, largely rich merely by labor and economy. . . . Persons desiring to be rich, and accumulating riches, always hate God, and never fear him; the idol they do fear [for many of them are sincerely religious] is an imaginary or mind-sculptured God of their own making, to their own liking." They hated him. How could they love? To them these exclamations were the wild images of a fancy tilted and tottering under excessive and ignorant thinking. "Idiot," read the penny-a-liner; "insane," muttered the Oxford teacher; "better have a guardian appointed," said the Churchman; "fool," scorned the editor. Amid these whirligigs of human hurricanes was it true that Ruskin had struck the sandbar of folly? Was he duped by a blue distance? Was he vainly mocked by the irony of events? Was he just under the juniper branches, with a clot on his brain? Extremist? One-sided? Yes, but

intelligently so. Is it not true that such as he have lifted the world a little nearer heaven, and became the forerunners of truths, which are destined to be coextensive with man? Extremists have caused the pendulum to stop midway in its swing. Raleigh, Savonarola, and Cromwell are types of such. Had it not been for the extremist, the world might to-day be sitting on its flat disk, with its feet hanging over in the placid waters of a placid ocean.

Ruskin believed that wealth is a social fact; that our plus possessions should be applied to another man's need. He was ever faithful to this principle. In the first years of his manhood, he began tithing his income, until, at length, he gave his entire fortune in serving his fellowman. He opened for the submerged classes libraries, clubs, and entertainment halls; purchased waste commons, and turned them into flower gardens and parks, with birds and

splashing fountains. Here the poor women might come for a long, hot summer afternoon, with crying babes clinging to their breast, and get a kiss of God's sunshine and a breath of his fresh air. He opened the Chapel of St. John, and brought hither his rich paintings for the walls, and placed pedestals for his sculptures, and turned the little sanctuary into an art gallery, and commanded the poor, free of price, to come hither seven days in the week and enjoy a feast of beauty. Thus he sought to dethrone the rule of violence. Repression disgraces; reverence ennobles.

Wealth is a social fact, otherwise it ceases to be wealth. A miner, in a desolate mountain region, discovers a mine of gold or silver; how much better off is he? He is just as poor as he was before, because he is in the mountain desert alone. If this statement is disputed, let the merchant open up business one hundred miles back in the forest;

the professional man, his office on some distant island; the manufacture, his shop on the prairie wild. The man of fortune is rich to-day because he is living where the people are, and they alone have made possible his wealth. No man has the right to do as he pleases with his own. The truth is, it is not his own in any such measure. A few years ago what a thrill of indignation swept over the country when a celebrated financier, on being approached in reference to his duty and obligation to the people, replied: "The public be ———." Every man of wealth is directly or indirectly aided by the public, and to that public he is obligated. Were it not for the public, he could not be protected in the possession of it; and, secondly, his commodities, whether of brain or hand, require the supply and demand of the same public. This is not socialism, though there is some truth in socialism. But, as a system,

socialism is not true. The teaching of Ruskin on this point is simply plain Christianity; 't is getting back to Jesus. Herbert Spencer shows the weakness and the fallacy of socialism, as a system, in its inevitable tendency to level individuality. For this reason it can never become permanently effectual, and should not. In this sense humanity can never stand on a common plane. It would be like a snowfall on a quiet night; before another day it would be gathered into heaps again. Ruskin's teachings brings all genius to the altar of human-kind. Amid the criticisms, sharp and terrific, he chose between the two alternatives; ease and luxury on the one hand, and the unpopular cause of enslaved people on the other. In this hour he did not make pay in ecclesiastical indorsement, nor did he bar up the flood-gates of the heart, but he himself became the living, acting, teaching incarnation of this sublime truth.

This a busy, hurrying, breathless day. There is one thing sure, we are determined to live while we live. Morning and evening are bumpers! They are battledore and shuttlecock in the daily grind. Men will give ten dollars rather than ten minutes of time. Each day rains cares and hard knocks; competitions are distracting, oftentimes turned into a black art. So it was in Ruskin's day. He saw men chased hither and thither, trying to get "on," ravished by competitions, disappointed by growing selfishness, cast down because of failure, care-worn by approaching uncertainty. He said that lives so pressed and perplexed demand more leisure. Sand-heaps were crushing them; an enlarged outlook they could not have. An expanse of vision can only come with an expanse of time, leisure for meditation. Character, the great word in the unabriged dictionary of human life, is not made where the crowd passes by.

L. of C.

Business pressure and social deformities can only be escaped by flying to ourselves. More time, pleaded Ruskin, that men, women, and children may have a chance to live in the higher lobes of their beings! The most impressive voice is that voice that calls apart. Leisure! Leisure to touch varied nature, and see how God adorned the world and how he laid the sleepers; leisure to make excursions in green pastures and beside still waters; leisure that jaded limbs may relax and return with vigor; leisure that the fires of excitement may go down, and think a while on the couch of wisdom; leisure to forget the tiresome insipidity of the multitudes, and to fly from the "ring around a rosy circle," and blind the eyes from the shining, swimming, simpering crowds; leisure to rescue self from decay, and be alone to delve in the storied nature of our soul! Ruskin's plea for leisure, and the monotony with

which so many lives are burdened, reminds me sadly of an old woolen factory, marked with many hard years, and decayed, which stood near the home of my boyhood. Gone is the dam, the old mill-race, and the mill itself, with its many sunlight places and half-exposed ribs. But, closing the eye, I can see how the old scene of years ago. The old water-wheel is still there, hanging on its crooked axle, and the water is pouring in childish leaps and bounds over it. The old bent wheel moves round and round with a creak and rumble, filling the black, rusty buckets, and the empty ones, with their dusky mouths, are constantly returning to be refilled again, and so on and on, day and night, with idle and undying monotony. O the groveling life! Monotony dams it! Its only voice is the voice of the whistle. The ceaseless creak of the loom, and the listless rattle of machine, Ruskin argues, are the death sound of the

workmen. Every lever, ratchet, screw, and belt are parts of a machine which should be man's emancipator. Invention ought to work towards freedom. Every improvement in mechanics should mean more leisure for the laborer. Outside of the hands of the higher purpose, Aaron's rod was a sapless and a dead thing, but, when in the divine grasp, it becomes a scepter of royal strength. So Ruskin's philosophy is that every invention must be the liberator of man, unstrapping the awful grind and burden of daily toil, and thereby allowing the laboring man more time for self-improvement. The gauge of personal worth is to that degree that the hours of leisure become solemn, impressive, and reflective. Such hours enrich desires, purify thoughts, exalt purposes, and signalize victory for man.

Ruskin lived in the pursuit of the ideal. The first impression is, as we look out upon the old world, all things seem fixed.

But the second and third impressions are that nothing is fixed. Discontent is the law of all life. Every clod and pebble at our feet feels the stir of might. The tree, the bulb, the blade of grass are wrestling with forces unseen; they are trying to lose one life that they may find another. All things are striving to be other than what they are. The bud wants to realize itself in flower, and the acorn is struggling toward the oak. In our inner impulses we are all seeking the other self. There is a warfare between the actual and the potential, between the real and the ideal. The boy loses gun and dog, boat and rod, to become a man. May we let ourselves loose and lose ourselves. When we think properly, we pray; we are feeling our way after the vital source of things. We get a glimpse of the ideal, and our soul mounts after it. After all it is the germinal life of the oak that rends the acorn; ideals rend the human soul.

Deep and serious is life, let there be a tension between the subject and the object. Span the chasm, like unto some Paul Revere. Tennyson's "Two Voices" instruct us—an inspiration there, rather than an ambition here. Reach after the ultimate limit, "I am God's." We are ever conscious of our duality. Alcott says, "The dual is in us." The plain devil is in us sometimes. Reality and ideality must reach after divine things. We turn them over and over, and we always find that the essential element of one is the essential element of the other; what is fundamental in one is fundamental in the other. It is more essential for a man to be a man than to be an Englishman, Scotchman, or even an Irishman. One object is yellow, and another object is blue; it is more essential for them to have color than that one is yellow and the other is blue.

Ruskin's critics were life-shriveled, bent

cripples, who kick at everything that opposes them; but, by virtue of this gravity, he could fly. Mean resistance made him possible. He could see. Almost anybody could see the cedars, but it took a Solomon to see the hyssop. It takes great big things, things of gigantic proportions, to move most of us, because we can't see. With most people it takes a whole flower-garden to move and touch them, but a simple daisy caused Burns to fall on his knees, and his soul burst into wondrous song. Linnæus saw so much in one coarse, common flower that he wept in wondering praise. The earth-worm! O! out of the way with the nasty thing. Darwin, however, saw so much in this repelling creature that he wrote a whole volume about it. He really became the "poet laureate of the worm." What a eulogy you say? But it takes a big man to see the great and the magnificent in the commonplace. This is genius.

Ruskin possessed it. To all of the littleness of his day he closed his eye. An artist does not sit down somewhere to paint a malarial bog, but he goes where some mountain is lifting itself out of some flowery area, or where its crags protrude themselves above the infinite depths of the ocean. Our prophet, from his mountain-minded vision, beheld those summits upon which humanity was to be unfolded in a justice and love, and God the one common Father of all. His moral excellence stands apart. It rises above his fellows like the glories of land and sea upon the horizon. He believed that we are God's children of infinite possibilities. He dreamed of that day when the Spirit of Christ would stir every breast. As Wyclif sounded the clarion note to which the advancing host of the English Reformation rallied, so Ruskin is the prophet and seer of modern democracy. Listen—"Piers Plowman"—the first great

democratic song of English history! It is sounding the knell of feudalism, and declaring the rights of man. Ruskin's note is keyed to the same song:

> "The owl he fareth well
> In the shadows of the night,
> And it puzzleth him to tell
> Why the eagle loves the light;
> So he hooteth loud and long,
> But the eagle soars away,
> And on pinions swift and strong,
> Like a roused thought, sweeps away."

Ruskin's truth is the magical ideal of the kingdom of the Savior. Emerson says, "The affirmative of affirmatives is love." Here is where humanity is to rest, and from this rock it is to build its glory. This one supreme Christ-truth is like the cathedral tower which throws into its shadow the storied walls beneath, and whose radiance gleams like the immense cross upon its summit. This is the choral melody to which

the hearts of the world are to be attuned. It is coming! It is here! The Church of the Good Smaritan, the Church of "Abou Ben Adhem." Its creed and ritual are the beatitudes of the world's only Savior, and the Golden Rule of which he was the incarnation. Its every message will be that sin is abject slavery, that bigotry is bloodless oppression, that narrowness is blinded tyranny, and that the way of Calvary is the only way to the Father.

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